

# Lethal means Reduction

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# Sensitive Topic

- ▶ Suicide is an intense and sensitive topic for many people.
  - ▶ If you need to take a break, or step out, please do so.
  - ▶ Immediate Resources:
    - ▶ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
      - ▶ Service members and Veterans should press 1 to connect with the Veterans Crisis Line.
    - ▶ Crisis Services (Erie County): 716-834-3131
    - ▶ If you'd like to follow-up with us later, please email Celia Spacone at [cspacone@crisisservices.org](mailto:cspacone@crisisservices.org) or Katie Coric at [Kathryne.coric@va.gov](mailto:Kathryne.coric@va.gov)

# Overview

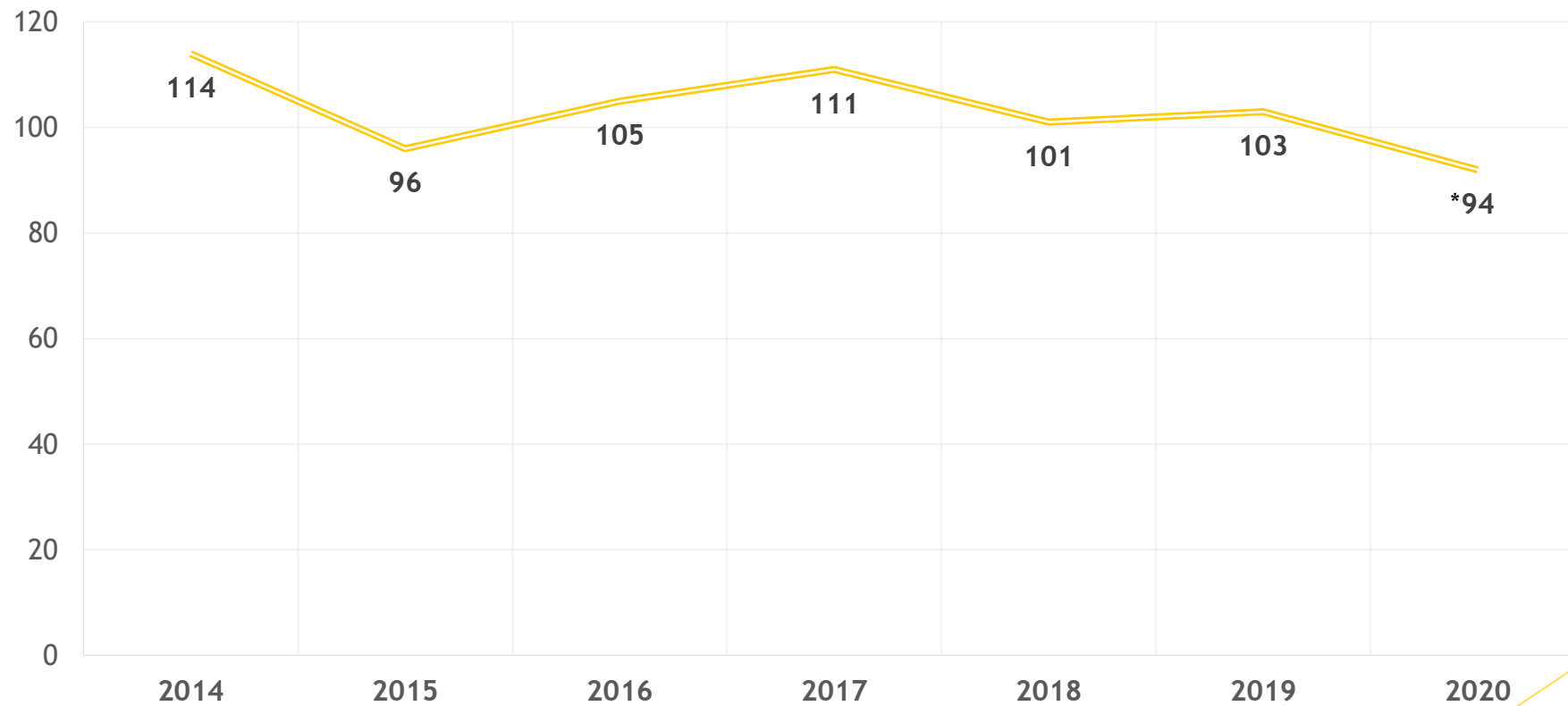
- ▶ Suicide statistics
- ▶ Lethal means statistics
- ▶ Why means matter
- ▶ Who should practice lethal means reduction
- ▶ How to practice lethal means reduction
- ▶ Resources

# Data: Suicide in U.S.

- ▶ **National public health problem (as defined by CDC)**
  - ▶ Over 45,000 Americans died by suicide in 2017, including 6,139 Veterans.
- ▶ **Service member and Veteran issue**
  - ▶ In 2017, the suicide rate for Veterans was 1.5 times the rate for non-Veteran adults.
- ▶ **Veteran populations at risk**
  - ▶ Younger Veterans
  - ▶ Women Veterans
  - ▶ Veterans in a period of transition
  - ▶ Veterans with exposure to suicide
  - ▶ Veterans with access to lethal means

# Total Suicides 2014-2020

## Erie County



# Veteran Key Data Points

## 2017 Key Data Points



The rate of suicide was

**2.2** *times higher among female Veterans*

*compared with non-Veteran adult women.*

*\* after accounting for differences in age*



The rate of suicide was

**1.3** *times higher among male Veterans*

*compared with non-Veteran adult men.*

*\* after accounting for differences in age*



Male Veterans ages

**18–34**

*experienced the **highest rates** of suicide.*



Male Veterans ages

**55 and older**

*experienced the **highest count** of suicide.*

**69%** *of all Veteran suicide deaths resulted from a firearm injury.*

# 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

- ▶ **Annual Report**

- ▶ Reports on trends in Veteran suicide deaths from 2005-2017
- ▶ Focuses on suicide counts and rates among various Veteran subpopulations

- ▶ **State Data Sheets**

- ▶ Examined state level Veteran suicide deaths and compared to national and regional trends
- ▶ 53 data sheets available for all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, and U.S. Territories

Access the reports online:

[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealth/suicide\\_prevention/data.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mentalhealth/suicide_prevention/data.asp)

# New York Veteran Suicide Data

**New York Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2018**

Sex	Veteran Suicides
Total	172
Male	160–170
Female	<10

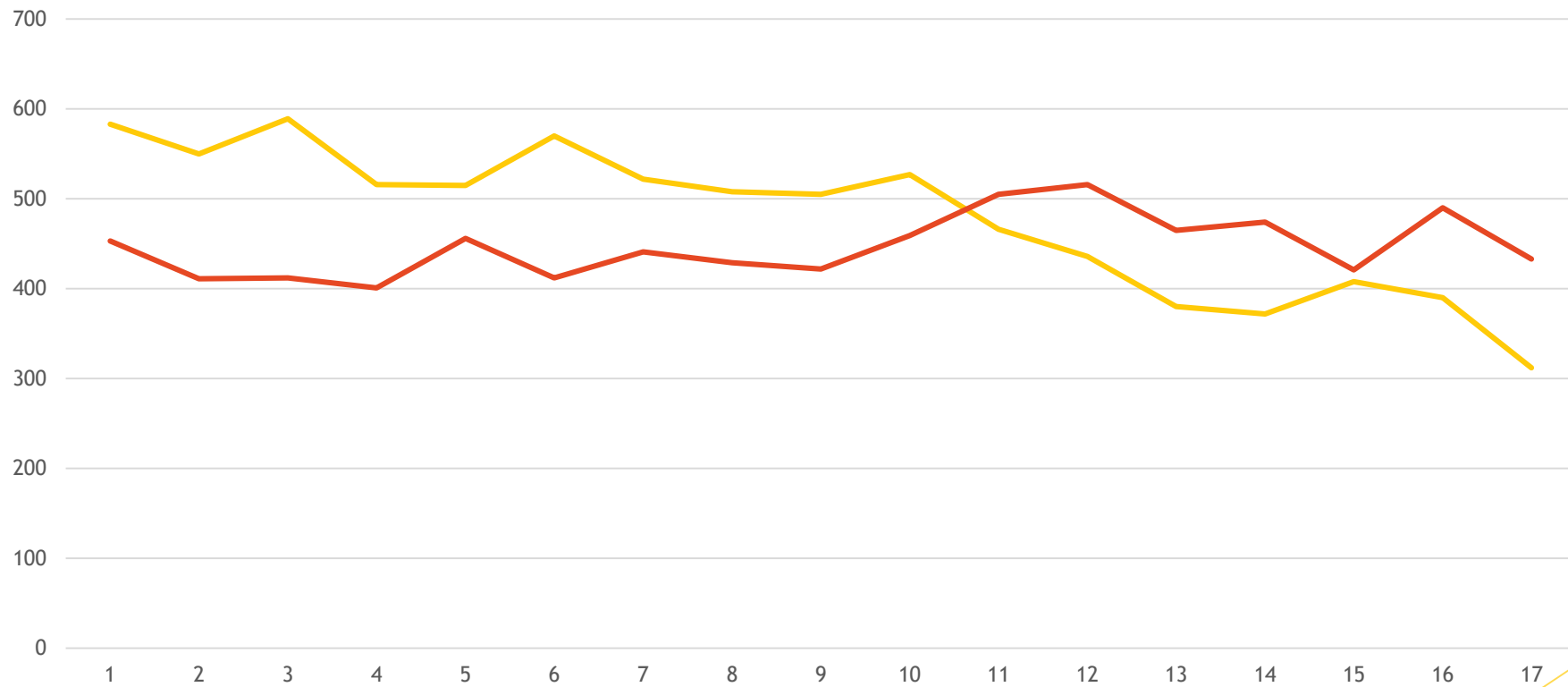
To protect confidentiality, suicide death counts are presented in ranges when the number of deaths in any one category was lower than 10.

**New York Veteran and Total New York, Northeastern Region, and National Suicide Deaths by Age Group, 2018<sup>c</sup>**

Age Group	New York Veteran Suicides	New York Total Suicides	Northeastern Region Total Suicides	National Total Suicides	New York Veteran Suicide Rate	New York Suicide Rate	Northeastern Region Suicide Rate	National Suicide Rate
Total	172	1,672	6,270	46,510	21.7	10.8	14.1	18.4
18–34	16	444	1,576	13,002	25.4*	9.5	12.3	17.3
35–54	46	572	2,173	15,866	25.4	11.5	15.2	19.1
55–74	74	513	1,963	13,514	22.2	11.6	14.9	18.6
75+	36	143	558	4,128	16.8	10.2	13.5	18.9



# NY Firearms Homicides & Suicides 2001-2017



Gun Homicides

Gun Suicides

# Means Matter

- ▶ In suicide prevention, we often focus on why people complete suicide.
- ▶ We have learned that it is also important to focus on how people attempt suicide.
- ▶ Lethal means reduction refers to the practice of securely storing lethal means, such as firearms and medications, in order to place **time** and **distance** between a person in crisis and means of suicide.



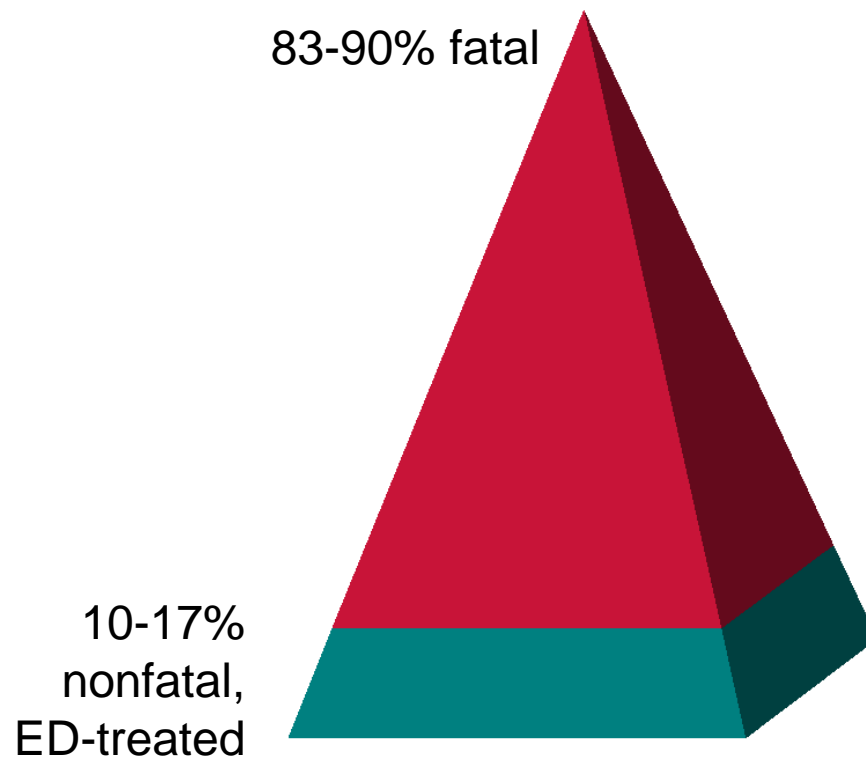
# Firearms & Israeli Defense Force (IDF)

- In the early 2000s, IDF focused on preventing suicides—most of which were by firearm, many on weekends while soldiers were on leave.
- In 2006, IDF required soldiers to leave weapons on base during weekend leaves.
- The suicide rate decreased by 40%.
- Weekend suicides dropped significantly.
- Weekday suicides did not.

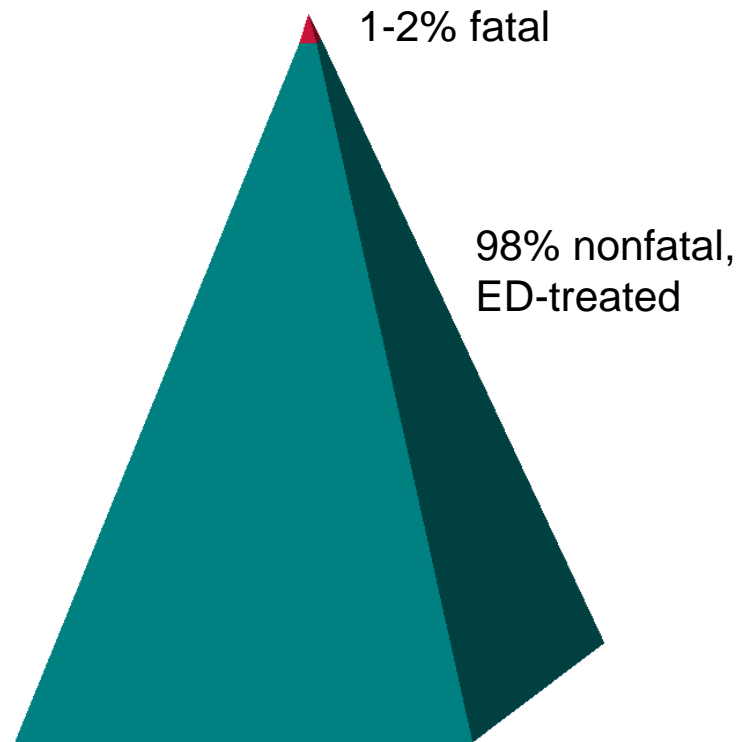
Lubin, SLTB 2010  
CALM Training, 11/2019



# Lethality of Suicide Methods

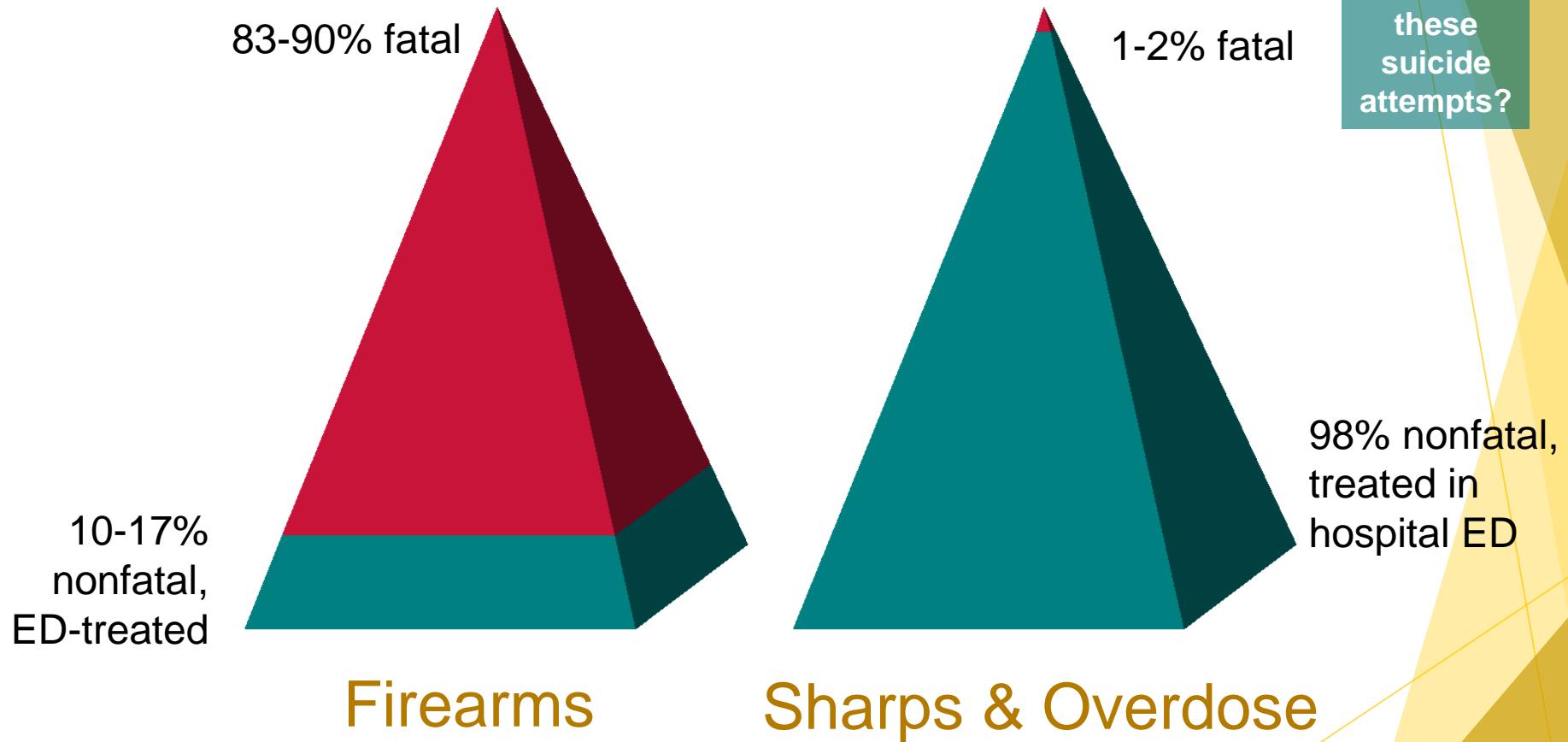


Firearms



Cutting & Poisoning

# Lethality of Suicide Methods

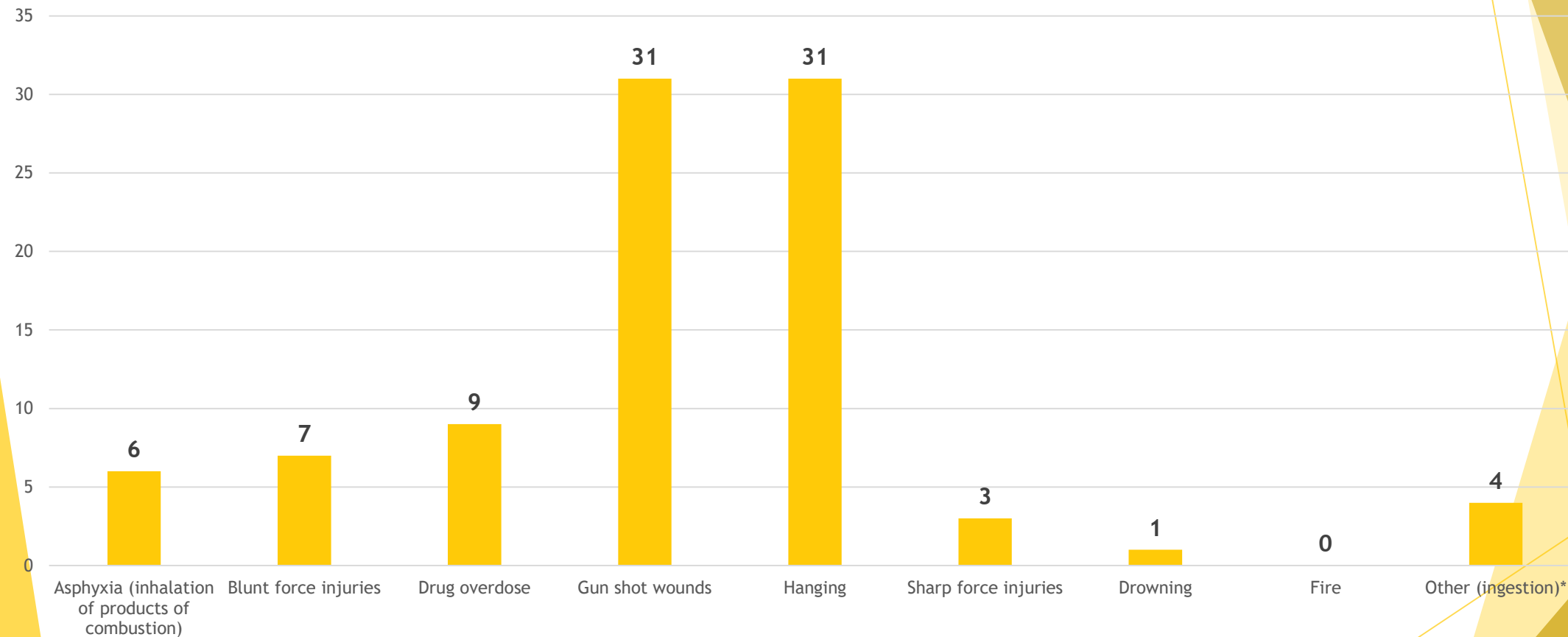


NOTE: We caution against informing your patients about the very low fatality for sharps and overdose. The perception that these methods are more lethal than they usually are may save lives.

# 2020

## Suicides by Method

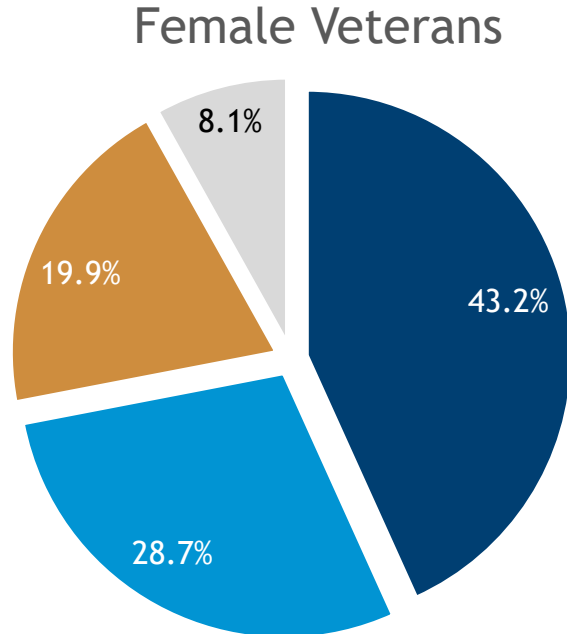
### Erie County NY



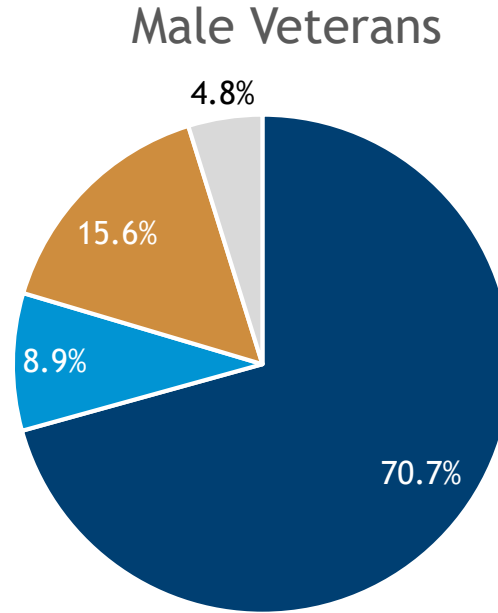
*\*67% of suicides were due to gun shot wounds or hangings*

*\*4 cases of sodium nitrate ingestion*

# US Veterans and Suicide Method (2017)

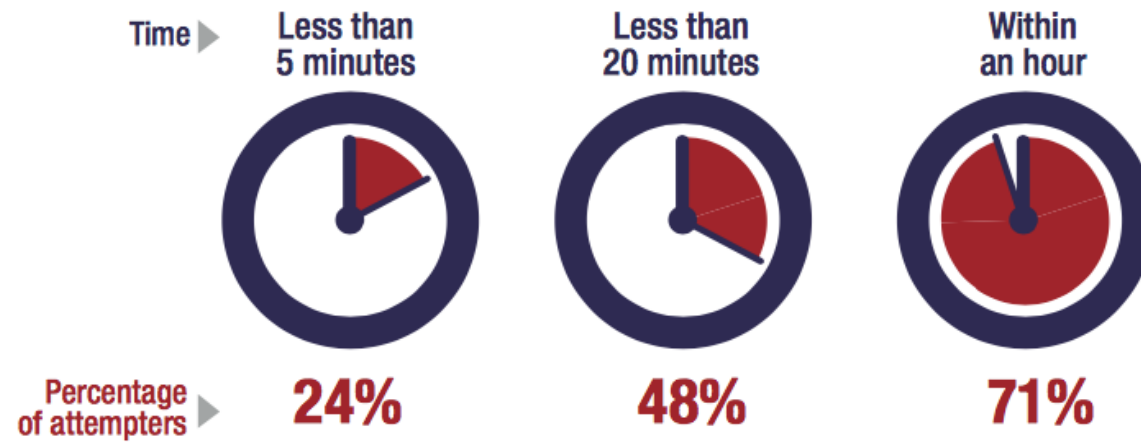


■ Firearm Injury  
■ Poisoning



■ Firearm Injury   ■ Poisoning  
■ Suffocation   ■ Other

# Time From Decision to Action < 1 hour



Source: Simon, T.R., Swann, A.C., Powell, K.E., Potter, L.B., Kresnow, M., and O'Carroll, P.W. Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters. SLTB. 2001; 32(supp):49-59



# Summary: Why Means Matter

- ▶ Suicidal crises are often brief.
- ▶ Some methods, especially guns, are far more lethal than others.
- ▶ >90% of those who attempt and survive do not go on to die by suicide.
- ▶ Many people who are suicidal are ambivalent.

*Putting time and distance between a suicidal person and a highly lethal means-especially a gun-can save a life.*

# Who Should Practice Lethal Means Reduction?

## EVERYONE!

- ▶ Everyone goes through hard times. Even if a client is not currently suicidal, taking precautions now can save lives later. Lethal means reduction can be a form of inoculation against suicide.
- ▶ Lethal means reduction can also protect loved ones and pets from accidental harm such as ingesting medication or accidentally discharging a loaded firearm.

## Family Members...

- ▶ Family members can see warning signs even before clinicians. Knowing the best means safety practice can empower them to take action to protect their loved ones who are going through a hard time.
- ▶ Caregivers of a person with dementia can practice lethal means reduction as a person's cognition declines

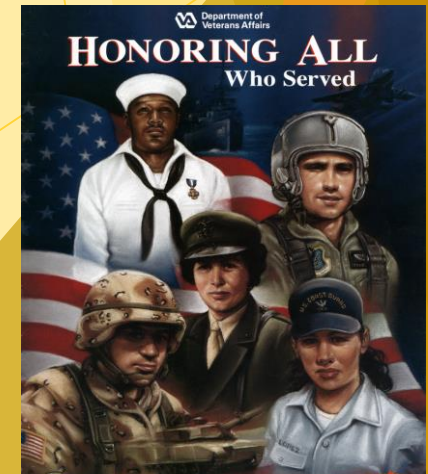
**First Responders** do important and challenging work. They often have access to firearms.



# Who Should Practice Lethal Means Reduction...

## Veterans

- ▶ Knowing best lethal means safety practices can help Veterans not only protect themselves but also friends and family members who may be going through a hard time and have access to lethal means.
- ▶ This is especially true for firearms
  - **1 in 2** Veterans own a firearm
  - Veterans are highly trained in the use of firearms - it was part of their profession!
  - **66%** of Veterans have at least one **unlocked firearm** at home, and **1 in 3** Veterans have a weapon **unlocked and loaded** at home. This can not only increase the risk of unintentional injuries and death, but also makes firearms easily accessible to a person in crisis.



# How to practice lethal means reduction?

## Medication Safety

### *Necessary Medication*

- ▶ Medication for home can be dispensed in **blister packaging** or stored in a **pill separator**
- ▶ People experiencing difficulties can store necessary medication in a **lock box** and give the key to someone they trust until they are feeling better

### *Unnecessary Medication*

- ▶ Some pharmacies have envelopes available to mail back unused/unwanted medications
- ▶ Disposal sites in the community can be located via *at [thepointny.org](http://thepointny.org) or [clearyourcabinet.ag.ny.gov](http://clearyourcabinet.ag.ny.gov)*



# How to practice Lethal Means Reduction?

## Alcohol Safety

- ▶ Alcohol can increase the risk of making negative decisions and can be dangerous when mixed with medications
- ▶ Those going through a hard time should consider storing **limited quantities or no alcohol** in the home until they are feeling better



# How to Practice Lethal Means Reduction?

## Firearm Safety

- ▶ It is good practice to always keep firearms **locked and unloaded** and to **store ammunition separately**. This is especially important when there are **children, pets, and/or people experiencing life difficulties** in the home!
- ▶ If a client is going through a hard time, encourage them to consider **locking their firearms** and **giving the keys or codes to someone they trust** until they are feeling better.
- ▶ Clients can also store unloaded firearms in a **locked storage unit** or rent out space at a **local gun shop**
  - ▶ **Pawn shops** and local **police departments** may also be an option

## *Additional Information*

- ▶ VA offers free cable locks for firearms - ask your local VA suicide prevention office



## Map of Gun Stores in Erie County NY

BEFORE ARRIVING AT ANY  
H A FIREARM

ed in Drive

 Share  Preview

rooper A, Zone 2 - Holl...

rooper A, Zone 2 - Elma

rooper A, Zone 3 - Colli...

rooper A, Zone 2 - Clar...

etail/repair/instruction

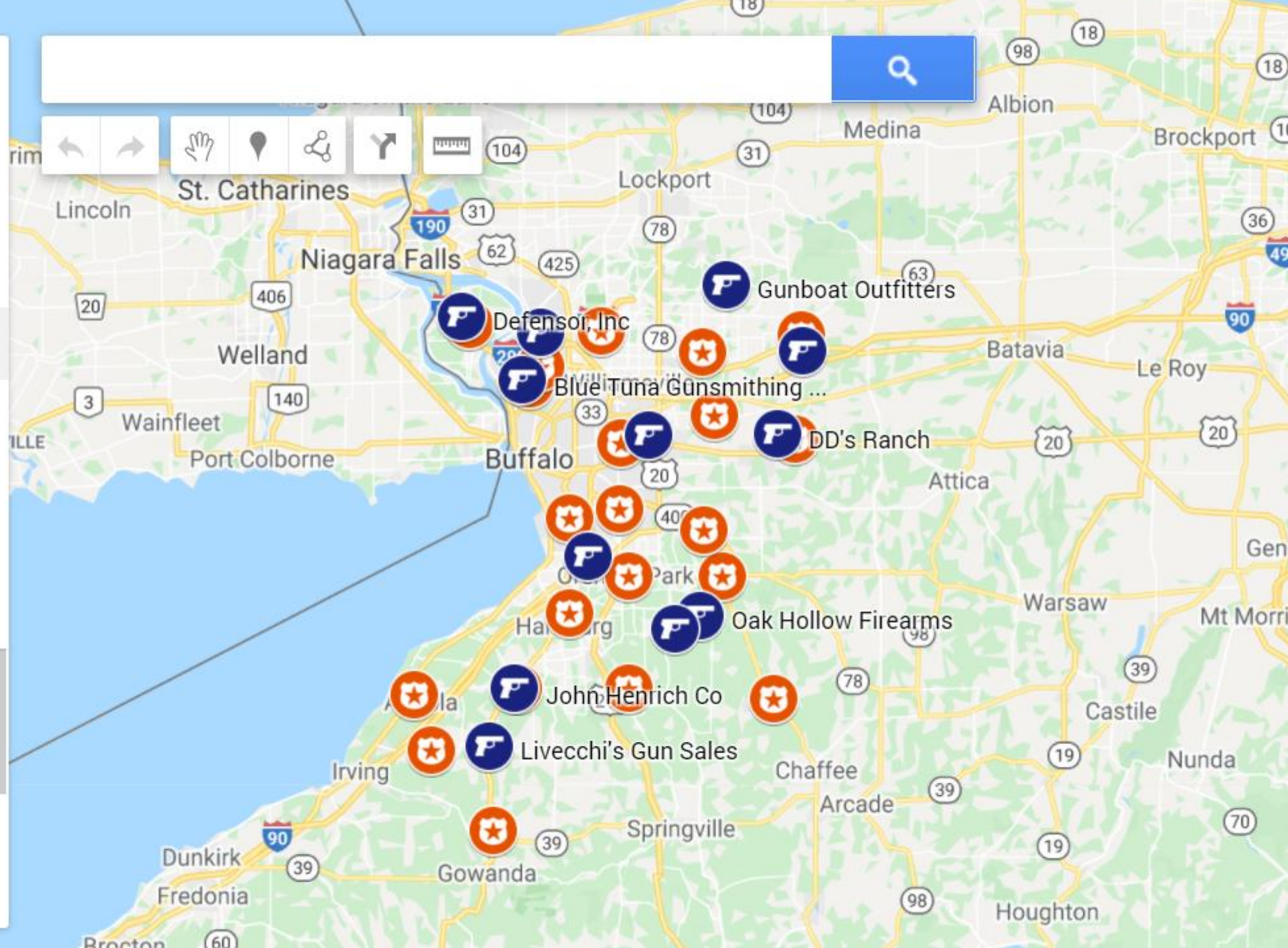
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una Gunsmithing LLC

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or, Inc

at Outfitters



## Map of Firearm Storage Locations

Looking for information on how to use the Storage Map? Watch our step by step video below.





## Understanding Risk:

### INDIVIDUAL RISK

- *Prior Suicide Attempt*
- *Mental Health Concerns*

### RELATIONSHIP RISK

- *Family History of Suicide*
- *History of Sexual or Physical Abuse*
- *Loss of Someone/Something Meaningful*

### ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

- *Access to Lethal Means*
- *Social Rejection*
- *Barriers to Accessing Help*
- *Exposure to Toxic Social Media*
- *Harmful Online Communications*

## Identifying Warning Signs:

Must Be Responded to Immediately:

**FEELINGS:** *Hopelessness, Worthlessness, Despair about the Future, Excessive Worry*

**ACTIONS:** *Reckless Behavior, Trying to Gain Access to Lethal Means, Online Searches for Ways to Die*

**CHANGES:** *Observed Differences in Previous Attitude, Affect, Mood, or Behavior*

**THREATS:** *Statements that Hint at Intent to Self-Harm*

**SITUATIONS:** *Circumstances that May Serve as Triggers, Periods of Uncertainty*

## Looking for More Information?

Visit The Suicide Prevention Coalition Online:

[suicidepreventionecny.org](http://suicidepreventionecny.org)

To Learn More about Suicide Prevention Efforts in New York State and Nationally, Visit:

[www.preventsuicide.org](http://www.preventsuicide.org)

[www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)

[www.zerosuicide.sprc.org](http://www.zerosuicide.sprc.org)

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

Seeking Resources for Kids and Teens?

[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

[www.sptsusa.org](http://www.sptsusa.org)

Experiencing Crisis Now?

**Crisis Services Can Help**

**24-Hour Hotline:**

**(716) 834-3131**

## Making Your Home Suicide-Safer:

### *A Guide to Reducing Risk in Your Home*

brought to you by

**The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Erie County**



# Is Your Home Suicide-Safer?

*These steps can help you make your home suicide-safer and potentially save a life.*

## Temporarily Remove Firearms

- Ask someone you trust to keep your guns in a safe place
- Contact your local police precinct or shooting club about temporary storage
- Lock and secure your ammunition; keep your ammunition and firearm in separate locations

## Limit Access to Medications

- All medications (over the counter or prescribed) can be lethal
- Consider safer options for storing medication, like a locked box or drawer
- Safely dispose of medications that are no longer needed

## Consider Other Household Risks

- Remove or monitor access to cords, ropes, knives, plastic bags, belts, scarves, leashes, ladders and stools
- Consider locking or hiding car keys
- Keep closets with rods locked at night
- Be aware that suicide by hanging or strangulation could occur while standing, lying down, or sitting

## FIREARMS

**Consider Removal During Crisis & Always Lock**

*Firearms are the most lethal means.*

*Reducing access can save lives. All firearms should be locked – check with your local VA or Sheriffs' Office for free gun-safety locks.*

## ASPHYXIATION

**Reduce the Risk**

*This is the most common means of suicide in our community.*

## MEDICATIONS

**Lock & Limit**

*Lethal doses of medications are the most accessible means of suicide. Dispose of old and unused medications at local drop-off locations. Visit [ThePointNY.org](http://ThePointNY.org) for a location near you.*

**If you are concerned that someone you care about is at risk of suicide, help is available:**

**NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE  
1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)**

**CRISIS SERVICES HOTLINE:  
(716) 834-3131**

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:  
Call 911 or Visit Local ER**

## Build a Foundation of Protective Factors for Your Family:

*Keep Kids Connected with Caring Adults  
Build and Maintain Connections in Your Community  
Focus on Positive Self-Esteem and Effective Coping Skills  
Access Care for Mental/Physical Health and Substance Disorders*

## Honors & Awards



This online course earned two bronze [Omni Awards](#)! The awards recognize outstanding achievement in film/video, web, and mobile media.

# CALM: Counseling on Access to Lethal Means

**Date:** 2018

(For resources, this is the publication date. For programs, this is the date posted.)





**crisis**services

*this moment forward*

# **24 Hour Crisis Hotline**

## **716-834-3131**

- **24-Hour Mobile Outreach Program-** mobile crisis response services for emergency mental health crisis for ages 18 plus.
- **Trauma Response Program-Postvention Support**





SpectrumHealth  
& Human Services

C.A.R.E.S.

716.882.4357

[WWW.SHSWNY.ORG/CARES](http://WWW.SHSWNY.ORG/CARES)

# Veterans' Crisis Line: Free, Confidential Support 24/7/365

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



**1-800-273-8255**  
**PRESS 1**

- Veterans
- Family members
- Friends
- Service members

• • • • Confidential chat at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **838255** • • • •